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Inside APHIS

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Rub-a-Dub-Dub, 4,000 Pounds of Mangoes in a Tub



These photographs from a treatment plant in Guadalajara, Mexico, show some of the stages of the hot water treatment and preclearance process mangoes will go through to be shipped to the United States. (Top) Crates hold the mangoes as they are lowered into water baths that maintain a minimum temperature of 115 °F. These large capacity tanks can hold 1,600–4,000 pounds of fruit each. (Bottom) Francisco Corrales, IS Area III, supervises a local plant employee who monitors the computer systems that provide information on the treatment, such as measuring water temperature to one-tenth of 1 °F.

See story on page 2.



APHIS PHOTOS BY ANN CZARNEWSKI

Y2K + U2

By Janet Wintermute, LPA and AIP Member

That famous "Year 2000" (Y2K, in the trade) computer problem you've been reading about in the popular press and here in Inside APHIS (fall 1997 issue) is more complicated than it looked at first glance. We knew right off that all software with date-sensitive elements would have to be made "Y2K compliant." In addition, we must make sure that the hardware we're using runs on computer chips that can handle the date of 1/1/00 without misreading it as January 1, 1900.

APHIS has just been informed that Y2K remediation efforts must be extended to all sorts of systems we hadn't thought about before: "smart" systems that control heat and air conditioning in our buildings nationwide, security locks at headquarters, parking lot gates, elevators, fax machines, all our telecommunications equipment (routers, satellite up- and downlinking

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Officers Trained to Supervise Treatments for Fruit Flies

They don't need to wash behind their ears to be allowed to come into the United States, just get rid of those Mexican, Mediterranean, and other fruit flies.

Qualified APHIS officers from Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) and International Services (IS) work with countries exporting mangoes to the United States to ensure the fruit is pest and disease free before it is shipped. APHIS is now training more officers to supervise these treatments performed by other countries. This is part of a preclearance program for fruit, in which the fruit is treated in the country of origin under APHIS supervision. Previously, this was accomplished by fumigating mangoes with ethylene dibromide. The preferred method for making mangoes safe for import to the United States is now hot water treatment.

Hot water treatment leaves no toxic residue like the previous fumigant, making it safer for the consumer. Also, more fruit may be processed in a shorter period of time with hot water treatment, and it causes less damage to the fruit. Some benefits of this process are that mangoes are treated before arriving in the United States and exporting facilities in the originating countries assume the cost of treatment and APHIS services.

Hot water treatment is being used in Mexico and other Central and South American countries to meet the U.S. entry requirements for mangoes. To ensure the treatment is performed in a manner that eliminates pests and does not compromise the quality of the fruit, APHIS is training additional officers to work with plant protection services of the exporting countries to supervise and monitor the treatment process.

In cooperation with the IS Preclearance Staff and Raymond Carbajal, the IS officer in charge of the mango preclearance program in



APHIS PHOTOS BY ANN CZAPIEWSKI

Raymond Carbajal, IS Director Area III, Guadalajara, Mexico, inspects mangoes in crates before they are treated in a hot water bath. Depending on the shape and size of the fruit, mangoes should remain in water for 65, 70, or 95 minutes.

Guadalajara, Mexico, PPQ Supervisor John Dooley, San Francisco, CA, and PPQ Officer Sandy Jordan, Oakland, CA, arranged for and California State Plant Health Director Helene Wright approved the training of additional PPQ officers to supervise hot water treatments at exporting sites. PPQ sends officers to serve on temporary duty in countries other than Mexico. In Mexico, IS officers perform inspections, monitor treatments, and assist PPQ officers with their training in Mexico. This series of training is the first in several years to be conducted outside of the U.S. Territory of

Puerto Rico. Classes to train more PPQ officers to supervise mango hot water treatments are scheduled to commence before April 1998.

APHIS has been sending officers to hot water treatment facilities in countries such as Brazil, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Peru, and Venezuela on temporary assignment to supervise treatments since 1990. ♦

Once all parameters of the treatment are met, the fruit is taken to an isolated quarantine area for cooling and packing into boxes (Right). After packaging, the mangoes are either precooled or moved directly into a refrigerated container to be shipped.

International Marketplace

Australia

After more than a year of discussions, the Australian Government agreed to reaccept phosphine fumigations of shelled almonds from the United States. APHIS submitted efficacy data on the phosphine treatment and additional biological information on the target pest, navel orange worm, to get the agreement. Plant Protection and Quarantine's (PPQ) Alan Green and Mike Guidici Pietro worked on getting reacceptance of phosphine treatment.

Dominican Republic

Hog cholera, or classical swine fever, has now spread throughout most of the Caribbean island of Hispaniola after being confined to Haiti—the western half of the island—until March 1997. The Dominican Republic makes up the eastern half of the island. To prevent this disease from entering the United States or Puerto Rico in swine products during peak holiday travel, APHIS issued a press release on December 23, 1997, asking international travelers to not bring prohibited meat or meat products with them into the United States. The higher risk U.S. ports-of-entry of San Juan, New

York, Newark, and Miami have all increased passenger and baggage inspections to stop the potential movement of the disease. Veterinary Services' (VS) Doug Gregg, Tim Deveau, A.C. Welsch, Ed Arza, John Belfrage, Mark Schoenbaum, Adrian Guzman, Juan Lubroth, and Eduardo Rossy, and International Services' (IS) Rob Tanaka, Eloisa Jones, and Farouk Hamdy have assisted in monitoring the disease. IS' Osvaldo Perez-Ramos, Area Director for the Caribbean, and his staff in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, have coordinated APHIS' support for monitoring hog cholera in both Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

Mexico

APHIS approved Mexico's request to eliminate the restrictive USDA policy for the entry of Mexican rail cars into the United States. USDA abolished the list of prohibited rail cars and issued a new policy on Mexican boxcars entering the United States. These changes create a regulatory policy consistent with APHIS' overall strategy for dealing with Karnal bunt and other grain pests. PPQ's Phil Garcia, South Central Region, worked on these negotiations.

Panama

IS has relocated the screwworm program headquarters (or Region V) with the Regional Directors and administrative staff from Mexico City to Panama City, Panama. Formal inauguration ceremonies were held December 16, 1997, for the new screwworm headquarters and attended by the U.S. Embassy Charge d'Affairs, Edward O'Donnell, and the Panamanian Minister of Agriculture and Livestock Development, Carlos Sousa-Lennox. The new screwworm program headquarters in Panama will be complimented at a future date with a new screwworm mass-rearing facility using sterile insect technology. IS' John Wyss, Region V Screwworm Director, attended the ceremonies on behalf of APHIS.

South Africa

In December, the Republic of South Africa granted access to U.S. corn (grain), creating a new market with an annual potential of \$70 million. The only condition of entry is that South African importers must crush the corn prior to its public sale to eliminate the perceived risk from the corn disease Stewart's wilt. This agreement was reached after extensive discussions and site visits by South African quarantine officials to research facilities in the United States working on Stewart's wilt. PPQ's Alan Green and Bob Spaide worked on this access issue.

Palestinian Authority

APHIS granted access to tomatoes grown in Gaza and for which production is administered by the Palestinian Authority. A prerequisite to this program was the establishment of an acceptable system for monitoring the export system between APHIS and the plant protection agency of the Palestinian Authority. PPQ's Joan Sills and Pete GROSSER took the lead in this program. ♦



NAHMS Equine '98: A Study of a Different Color

By Nina (Rothenberger) Stanton and Jennifer Houser, VS, Fort Collins, CO

Various animals, various purposes: where does one begin to define the equine industry for a national study that will provide information to the industry on the health and well-being of equines in the United States? National staff of Veterinary Services' (VS) National Animal Health Monitoring System (NAHMS) rose to this challenge during the needs assessment phase of Equine '98, a national study that will be conducted this year. The needs assessment determined areas the study will focus on, such as equine health and management practices.

Since 1989, NAHMS has collected national data on the swine, cattle-on-feed, beef cattle, dairy

animals, such as horses, mules, and donkeys, used for a variety of purposes, including rodeo, transportation, pleasure riding, work, and companionship. "The horse industry has a depth that doesn't exist in the cow-calf or pork industries, and the variety of equine data sources out there parallels the industry," says NAHMS equine specialist, Josie Traub-Dargatz, who is currently on loan to APHIS from Colorado State University.

Traub-Dargatz worked with NAHMS to identify and evaluate equine data sources on the first Equine '98 needs assessment project, a catalog of 17 data sources that was made available to

such as the farmer in New York and the trail rider in Colorado.

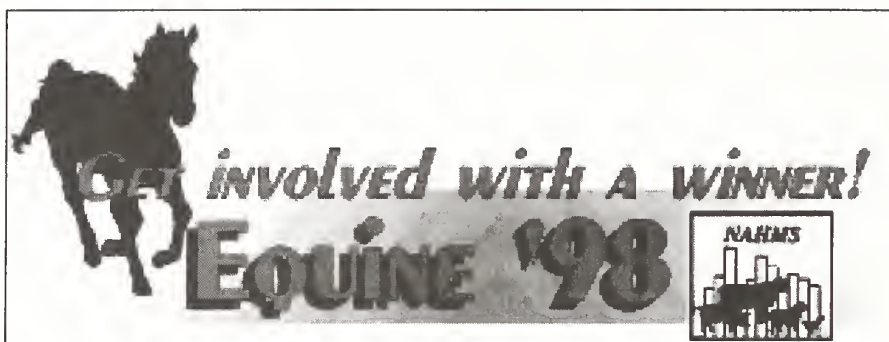
The team implemented two survey methods NAHMS had never used before for a needs assessment: a toll-free telephone number and an interactive Web site. Information Technology community (ITc) members stepped in to assist NAHMS on the technical side.

"For the Web project, I found nothing that was reliable enough to gather quality data and also allowed survey data to be pulled into analytical software packages," says ITc's Mike Moxcey. To fill this need, he designed the data collection tools himself and designed the World Wide Web page.

ITc problem solvers also stepped in when an equine publication misprinted the Web site address, immediately setting up a second site to ensure respondents were not lost in cyberspace. In the name of customer service, ITc's Renee Klund stretched her world of experience to include veterinary vocabulary. She struggled to speak clearly through tongue twisters such as equine protozoal myeloencephalitis (pro-toe-ZO-al MY-uh-lo-in-SEFF-uh-LIE-tiss) while serving as the voice for the toll-free telephone survey.

From January 1 to March 15, 1997, NAHMS staff members received 2,599 responses from horse owners and other industry members (1,297 through the automated telephone survey and 1,302 via the interactive Web page). Over three-fourths of those responding identified their primary role in the industry as horse owners.

Traub-Dargatz and the NAHMS team then faced the challenge of developing an optimal study design while incorporating the wide array of needs emerging from the focus groups and horse owner survey. The results are a list of objectives that include: providing baseline information on equine health, estimating uses of equine health-related management practices, and



This artwork is from the Equine '98 interactive site on the Internet, set up by VS and ITc, requesting owners participate in the industry study. Besides this technology, APHIS also is using a toll-free number to receive information from participants.

cattle, sheep, and catfish industries. NAHMS performs these types of studies to fill information gaps, add value to existing data, and to provide periodic health and management benchmarks to industries and their cooperators. Each study begins with a needs assessment phase, during which NAHMS partners with an industry, academia, and other government officials to identify potential study topics. These topics must represent key areas not addressed by other research efforts.

Each commodity requires a unique approach, especially during the needs assessment phase. The Equine '98 Study is especially unique because of the broad industry it will address. The equine industry includes a variety of

researchers across the country in 1995. After NAHMS completed the catalog, the Equine '98 study design team of veterinarians, epidemiologists, and statisticians considered exactly who should be involved in other needs assessment activities for the national study. Multiple focus groups were convened at industry meetings in 1996 and 1997 to gather input from industry, academic, and government representatives. Such focus groups have become a staple in the NAHMS needs assessment process as an effective means of gathering information from a variety of sources. The study designers decided that Equine '98 should go beyond these traditional techniques and involve other groups,

EQUINE continued on p. 5

Dive On In: Vets and Techs Trained in Aquaculture Health

With \$5.5 billion worth of economic impact and approximately 180,000 jobs in the United States, aquaculture is a rapidly growing agricultural industry. One of the ways APHIS supports aquaculture producers is by training APHIS staff in applied aquaculture epidemiology (disease study) activities.

From November 18 to 20, 1997, 36 employees from Veterinary Services (VS) and Wildlife Services, representing 21 States, Puerto Rico, and headquarters received training in Riverdale, MD, from Canadian aquaculture epidemiology experts. VS' National Animal Health Programs arranged the training through the Canadian Aquaculture Institute and the Atlantic Veterinary College, Prince Edward Island University.

Otis Miller, National Aquaculture Coordinator for VS, previously took the training in Canada. "I thought it was a needed class for APHIS, and the group is available to conduct this specialized training wherever it is needed," said Miller. In addition to headquarters, employees from the southeastern and central regions took the training. Employees from the northern and western regions also will complete the training in fiscal year 1999, covering all the VS regions.

Elizabeth Spangler, from the Atlantic Veterinary College at Prince Edward Island University in Canada, gives some pointers on epidemiology database management software to Travis Carpenter, a WS aquaculture specialist from Ruskin, FL. This software helps health officials track diseases and conduct investigations.



APHIS PHOTO BY ANN CZAPIEWSKI

One practical activity employees learn about is endorsement of animal health certifications for the exportation of live aquatic species and related products. These certifications are voluntary, and to keep up with the demand, APHIS needs to train its Veterinary Medical Officers (VMO's) and Animal Health Technicians who are designated aquaculture coordinators for or have an interest in aquaculture.

APHIS aquaculture coordinators endorsed 3.8 million live ornamental fish for export to over 40 countries in 1996, and from May 1994 to December 1997, VS VMO's have certified for exportation over 200 million live salmonid eggs.

The training also includes assisting producers with exports, using the health certificates,

conducting farm inspections, collecting and shipping test samples, and providing diagnostic expertise for those testing samples.

To better track diseases and conduct epidemiologic investigations, employees spent time learning to set up databases using EpiInfo. This is a software package produced by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, GA, and the World Health Organization designed especially for public health professionals' needs in data management and epidemiologic analysis.

Currently, the VS Aquaculture Program has five approved voluntary certification sites located in Arkansas, California, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Washington State, which also serves Alaska. ❖

EQUINE continued from p. 4

determining type and use of animals by type of operation. The study also will measure the prevalence of specific infectious agents and gather data related to health problems such as colic, lameness, respiratory disease, equine infectious anemia, and equine protozoal myeloencephalitis.

Beginning March 16, 1998, the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) will contact over 4,000 equine owners about equine health and management practices. Owners then will have the option to participate in the year-long study, including collection of biological

samples by APHIS veterinarians or animal health technicians. The NAHMS national staff hopes to distribute the first Equine '98 results in August, an accomplishment that will require coordination and teamwork among the national staff, NASS, State and Federal personnel, equine owners, and industry reviewers. Thousands of people will have a hand in data collection, validation, analysis, and the eventual production of Equine '98 Study reports.

NAHMS wants to ensure targeted national studies reach APHIS-wide goals: providing

worthwhile customer service and assisting in areas customers believe to be most vital in animal health monitoring, productivity, and efficiency. Equine '98 demonstrates NAHMS' flexibility during needs assessment activities and emphasizes that doing the job right the first time takes unconventional thinking and detailed preliminary work.

Find out more about NAHMS or the Equine '98 Study, at our Web site (www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/ceah/cahm/nproj.htm) or e-mail NAHMS (NAHMS-info@aphis.usda.gov). ❖

Canada Geese: Flying Elephants We Must Avoid!

By Sandra E. Wright, Wildlife Services, Sandusky, OH

A version of this article appeared in the Federal Aviation Administration's FAA News (November/December issue).

In the last glow of evening, a flock of honking Canada geese pass overhead in their familiar "V" formation, silhouetted against the darkening sky—a stirring sight to most of us. However, if you are a pilot who had a run-in with one of those large birds, you might see them in a different light. Each year an average of 60 goose strikes are reported to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), but based on FAA statistics, there are likely another 240 that are not reported.

Biology

There are eleven subspecies of Canada goose. These subspecies range in weight from the 3-pound lesser Canada goose in Alaska to the 12-pound giant Canada goose, a native to the upper Midwest that has been widely introduced elsewhere in the United States. Their life span is about 8 years, and the usual hatch is five young. In late June, the adults molt and the young have not acquired their flight feathers; neither are able to fly. By late July, all the family can fly, and they congregate in large flocks in open areas where there is abundant food. Geese, which are primarily grazers, are attracted to airports because of the grassy expanses devoid of trees and shrubs.

Populations on the Rise

Canada geese are among the most numerous and diverse of all waterfowl species in North America. The Canada goose most commonly seen in parks, on golf courses, and other urban environments is the non-migratory giant Canada goose. Their population has increased from about 200,000 to 1.8 million (800 percent) since 1970. The number of Canada geese migrating through North America has in-

creased from 1.8 to 3 million (67 percent) since 1970. The winter distribution of these migratory birds has changed over the last 40 years because of changes in land use, the development of State and national wildlife refuges, habitat restoration, and improved wildlife management practices. Now, many flocks remain in northern areas in winter, and migration patterns are not as clear as they once were. Increasing goose populations, coupled with the growth in commercial and general aviation, have set the stage for more frequent collisions between aircraft and geese.



Devastating and Costly Strikes

Nearly 50 percent of all goose strikes involve some degree of aircraft damage, and at least 24 percent have a negative effect on the flight. A few high profile accidents in the United States have recently brought attention to this growing problem. In June 1995, a Concorde (supersonic transport jet—transatlantic), on final approach to JFK International Airport, NY, struck several geese, destroying two engines. No one was injured, but the damage totaled about \$6 million. Three months later an Airbus 320 (passenger jet) struck Canada geese at La Guardia Airport, also in New York. The repair bill and lost revenue came to over \$2.5 million. In December 1995, a Boeing-747 (passenger jet), on approach to JFK International, collided with snow geese. The crew said, "It felt like

the aircraft was being struck by sandbags." Two engines were destroyed and the airframe was damaged. Repair costs totaled \$6 million.

To date, the most devastating strike with Canada geese happened at Elmendorf Air Force Base, AK, in September 1995. Twenty-four military personnel were killed when their E-3 AWACS (modified passenger jet) aircraft crashed after striking a flock of Canada geese on takeoff. Along with the tragic loss of lives, a staggering cost of \$189 million was incurred.

The Force of an Elephant

Large birds are the greatest threat to aircraft because the force of the impact is affected by the bird's weight and the speed of the aircraft. The impact of a 12-pound goose striking a jet can be equal to the force of an African elephant stampeding over a parked car. Most of today's commercial jet engines can withstand the shock of ingesting a 1.5-pound bird, and the newest commercial jet engines have been designed to take a 2.5-pound bird without failing. Aircraft frames and engines are not designed to withstand striking a single 12-pound goose, let alone a flock of geese at high speed.

When and Where Goose Strikes Occur

Analysis of over 11,000 bird strikes to civil aircraft from 1992-1996 yields the following information. Strikes are most likely to occur in March (14 percent) and August through November (45 percent). The most likely phase of flight for strikes is approach (40 percent) and during the day/dawn (46 percent) time period. Goose strikes have been reported in 42 States. Illinois reported the most goose strikes (8.7 percent), followed closely by Connecticut (8.3 percent) and California (8.0 percent). The northeastern United States seems

to be heavily represented with four States and the District of Columbia reporting 30 percent of the goose strikes. More strikes occur on the runway than at any other altitude.

What Is Being Done To Control Geese?

Scare Tactics

In recent years, wildlife biologists from APHIS' Wildlife Services (WS) program have been assisting airport managers with goose management problems. Recently in Missouri, an aircraft suffered damage to one wing when it struck a goose on landing. As a result, WS was contacted for assistance, and the biologists found 300 geese feeding in crops adjacent to the runway. Many of the birds were repelled from the area using pyrotechnics, others were removed during the goose hunting season.

Geese can be repelled from problem areas by using noise-making devices such as shell crackers—special shells fired from shotguns that project firecrackers and propane cannons that produce a sound similar to that of a shotgun. Distress calls are also played to frighten the geese away. With persistent use, geese become accustomed to scare tactics and are not affected by them.

Relocation and Removal

Geese are sometimes removed from areas where they are causing problems. Officials at Washington National and Washington Dulles International airports outside of Washington, DC, were unable to keep geese completely away from the airports using harassment techniques. WS biologists, assisted by the Virginia Department of Agriculture, captured 1,098 resident geese during the summer molt. Some were relocated to the Tidewater region of Virginia. Others were donated to charitable organizations for food.

Habitat Management

Habitat management is one of the best ways of preventing unwanted wildlife from using airport grounds. Biologists from WS' National Wildlife Research Center currently are researching types of grass and heights of vegetation that will reduce airport attractiveness to geese. These biologists are also investigating chemical repellents such as lime and anthraquinone, that can be applied to grass to reduce grazing.

Recognizing the threat posed to aircraft by wildlife, the FAA recommends curtailing the growing of crops on airport property. Unfortunately, this is being met with

opposition by some airport managers who think that it is futile since birds will be around regardless of what they do. However, other managers, including a former military pilot, support the FAA saying, "I know what a goose can do to an engine. When I was in the military, farming operations were not allowed around military fields."

Reporting Strikes

Wildlife strike reporting is critical to managing this serious problem. The accuracy of FAA analyses and the ability to provide appropriate recommendations are limited by data availability. All reported wildlife strikes are entered into the FAA Wildlife Strike Database. The FAA estimates that less than 20 percent of all strikes are reported. If airport managers and wildlife biologists are to control the bird strike problem, they must have accurate data on which to base their actions. Wildlife strikes should be reported using FAA Form 5200-7 "Bird/Other Wildlife Strike Report." The information is combined with all other reports to give a better picture of what is going on with wildlife in and around airports and the economic and safety impact these strikes have.

Remember, elephants can't fly, but an aircraft strike with a Canada goose can make you believe they do!

(Sandra Wright is employed by the USDA/APHIS National Wildlife Research Center in Sandusky, Ohio. She manages the FAA Wildlife Strike database through an interagency agreement. The database has over 18,000 wildlife strike reports to aircraft since 1989 and is growing by about 2,300 strikes per year.) ❖

APHIS PHOTO



One method of keeping Canada geese and other birds from interfering with planes is to capture and relocate them. WS biologists, assisted by the Virginia Department of Agriculture, captured 1,098 resident geese at two Washington, DC, area airports during the summer molt. Some were relocated to the Tidewater region of Virginia.

APHIS Employees Left Homeless by Typhoon

Dear APHIS Family,

On December 15, Super Typhoon Paka hit Guam with record gusts of 236 miles per hour and sustained winds of 150 miles per hour. The storm caused more than \$100 million in damage and has left thousands homeless, including two APHIS Wildlife Services (WS) employees. The damage to Guam was so severe that power will be out on the southern part of the island for the next 3 to 4 months.

A relief fund has been set up to help APHIS employees on Guam cope with their losses. You may send a check to:

Typhoon Paka Relief Fund
Agriculture Federal Credit Union
4700 River Road
Riverdale, Md 20737-1232

Any donation is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Bobby Acord
Deputy Administrator
Wildlife Services



APHIS PHOTO BY ANN CZAPIEWSKI

Wildlife Services employees come to the aid of many endangered species, such as this California least tern. Now you can lend a helping hand to two WS employees who lost their home in a typhoon by making a contribution to the relief fund.

You're Not Seeing Double; It's a New *Inside APHIS*

This spring, you will find news and information from *Inside APHIS* in two places: a printed newsletter and news items posted on the APHIS Web (a.k.a. the Intranet).

Inside APHIS will be published in this printed newsletter format quarterly. You'll find articles featuring APHIS programs, people, and their accomplishments.

In March, watch the APHIS Web for biweekly news briefs and photographs of what's happening in APHIS.

The Intranet edition will be for timely information, so submit articles promptly. You have a better chance for publication if you contact the editor well in advance of a planned event and before you begin to write any article. The deadline for submissions for the summer edition of the newsletter is April 17. You should contact the editor about submissions by April 10.

Deadlines for the news briefs will be every other Thursday starting

March 5. These pieces should be timely and relatively short.

Submit text in electronic format by disk or e-mail with a hardcopy printed in double-spaced type. Photos for the APHIS Web may be color. Any photos for the quarterly newsletter should be of high quality and must be approved in advance by the editor and photographer. Contact information is on page 12.

We look forward to your articles and hope you enjoy the new format. ❖

APHIS Organizational Directory and Electronic Library

The APHIS Organizational Directory is now available on the Internet at www.aphis.usda.gov/aphisdir. It also can be accessed through the APHIS home page by clicking on the link for **Directory**, then the link for **APHIS Organizational Directory**. This directory is organized by program area. To

look for a particular APHIS employee, enter the name in the white box halfway down the page, then click on the "Search" button. You can also download the directory into a WordPerfect file to print.

To keep the directory current, please notify Celeste Sickles or Joan Kunz with changes. Their

e-mail addresses are on the home page with the directory.

Celeste and Joan also maintain the APHIS Electronic Library, which stores all current APHIS Directives and Administrative Notices. APHIS Manuals are being added. You can access the library at www.aphis.usda.gov/library. ❖

Human Resources Information

Temporary Continuation of Health Insurance Coverage

Changes in your family situation can affect your Federal Employee's Health Benefits (FEHB). Once a divorce is final, your former spouse is no longer eligible for coverage as a family member. When your child reaches age 22 (even though he or she may be in college), or marries before age 22, he or she can no longer be covered under your Federal employee's health insurance.

Family members losing coverage may be eligible for Temporary Continuation of Coverage (TCC) for up to 36 months. TCC is a feature of the FEHB program that allows certain people to temporarily continue FEHB coverage once they are no longer an eligible family member. TCC enrollees pay the full premium for the health plan they select. The full premium includes both the employee and Government shares of the premium, plus a 2 percent

administrative charge. TCC enrollees may change health plans during the annual FEHB open season, and may also discontinue their coverage at any time. The employee must notify Human Resources Operations (HRO) within 60 days of the change in a family member's status that makes him or her eligible for TCC.

TCC is also available to employees who separate from Federal service. Separating employees who participated in FEHB can enroll in TCC for up to 18 months after the date of their separation. HRO will notify separating employees of their eligibility for TCC upon receipt of their separation information.

Please contact your Benefits Specialist in HRO if you are interested in receiving more information about TCC.

Social Security Information at Your Fingertips

Do you need information about Social Security retirement benefits,

or how to get a Social Security number? Now, you can get all the facts about Social Security right at your computer or fax machine.

Social Security has always had numerous pamphlets and factsheets available as part of its public information program. Now many Social Security information resources are available to you almost instantly.

One way is through the Social Security Administration's home page (<http://www.ssa.gov>). You can also get documents by FAX. Get a copy of the FAX catalog by calling (888) 475-7000 from a touchtone phone. Each time you call, you can request up to three documents to be faxed to a number you specify. This service is available 24 hours a day.

More information on personnel and human resources such as benefits, pay, vacancies, guides, and directives is available on the Human Resources Web page (www.aphis.usda.gov/mb/mrphr). ♦

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electronics), scanners at ports, aviation systems, some of the research equipment in our labs—the list is mind boggling.

Fortunately, the IBM computers, Lotus Notes e-mail software, and the rest of the Lotus Smart Suite software we're buying comes off the shelf with Year 2000 compliance built in. But the old computer on your desktop may be running on a chip that was made before the Y2K crisis hit. And many of the 20+ "mission-critical" computer applications systems that APHIS employees use every day were created before the Year 2000 problem was widely understood.

The APHIS Integrated Planning (AIP) team is working with the agency's computer programmers in the Information Technology Community (ITC) to direct resources to fixing the Y2K problem in mission-critical systems first. By OMB mandate, APHIS must fix those Year 2000 problems, test the fixes, and implement the new systems by

March 31, 1999. But we have another 124 or so computer systems that also may need to be remediated. Fixing them will take more time, but each must be examined and—if found to have date codes—must be corrected, retired, or replaced well before the end of 1999.

Getting You Involved

Regardless of what you do in your job assignment, APHIS is going to need your help in inventorying machinery, computers, and software you use to do your job so that we can get the Y2K problem under control before the actual calendar deadline.

APHIS management and the ITC are devising ways we can involve every employee in supplying details about computer systems and equipment that uses computer chips, both of which might have Y2K compliance problems. There

will be a Web-based inventory site where workers can check the Y2K status of the equipment they have inventoried. And there will also be an interactive component at that site enabling workers to enter details like equipment type, brand name, model number, and so forth, for items at the worksite that have not already been checked for Y2K compliance. For more information about the Y2K project, check the **APHIS Y2K homepage** (www.aphis.usda.gov/it/y2k/) or the **USDA Y2K homepage** (www.ocio.usda.gov/y2k/index.htm).

This advisory is the first of several: we want everybody in the APHIS family to join together in taking ownership of this enormous problem. We will be sharing details with all employees in the near future. The Year 2000 problem can be solved in APHIS, but not without "U2." ♦

Inside APHIS congratulates and sends the best of luck to those retiring in '97!

Animal Care

De Arce, Joy Riverdale, MD

International Services

Corbe, Carolyn Piscataway, MD

Legislative and Public Affairs

Mark, Larry Washington, DC
Yurkovich, Mary Riverdale, MD

Management & Budget

Anhalt, Larry Minneapolis, MN
Bau, John Riverdale, MD
Bennett, Emma Washington, DC
Bickle, Patricia Riverdale, MD
Brookshire, Marjorie Riverdale, MD
Burke, Edward, Jr. Washington, DC
Lieder, Janet Minneapolis, MN
Lohr, Janice Washington, DC
Long, Clifton Blanchard, OK
McLaughlin, Doris Riverdale, MD
Miller, Robert Washington, DC
Ramsey, James Los Lunas, NM
Thackston, Larry Washington, DC
Trudeau, Thomas Riverdale, MD

Plant Protection and Quarantine

Abear, Antonio San Diego, CA
Andrade, Oswald Elizabeth, NJ
Arkle, Thomas Honolulu, HI
Bevill, James Blytheville, AR
Brown, Charles, Jr. Leighton, AL
Burdine, Eli San Luis, AZ
Cathon, Alan Norfolk, VA
Cousins, Sidney Riverdale, MD
Del Valle, Luis Miami, FL
Eads, Robert El Paso, TX
Ellin, Pedro San Juan, PR
Elliott, William Phoenix, AZ
Hance, Grace Riverdale, MD
Henson, Ancel, Jr. Houston, TX
Johnson, Timm Austin, TX
Langston, Althaea Riverdale, MD
Larsen, Frank Portland, OR
Okasako, Edward Miami, FL
Parker, Charles El Paso, TX
Pecson, Daniel New York, NY
Perry, Michael Las Cruces, NM
Quillin, Ralph Winter Haven, FL
Sayer, Stanley Buffalo, NY
Sierra de Arana, Emma San Juan, PR
Smith, Gary Portland, OR
Tardif, Joseph Falmouth, NY
Wheat, Linda Sacramento, CA
Woodburn, Hilda Riverdale, MD

Policy and Program Development

Hawkins, Sue Riverdale, MD
Hunt, Yolanda Riverdale, MD
Lowe, Sherry Riverdale, MD

Veterinary Services

Anderson, Carlene Ames, IA
Bridgewater, Donald Englewood, CO
Bringgold, James Fargo, ND
Burford, John Fort Collins, CO
Carnell, Joyann Tampa, FL
Conner, Linda Arlington, TX
Crews, Sue Atlanta, GA
Delangis, Roger Inglewood, CA
Enos, Frank Lander, WY
Fuhrman, William Woodbury, MN
Garcia, Wenceslao, Jr. Rio Grande City, TX
Garza, Horacio Los Ebanos, TX
Goll, Frederick, Jr. Ames, IA
Grant, Jack Rigby, ID
Hilton, James Rural Retreat, VA
Kane, Grady Fort Collins, CO
Kelley, Melvin Austin, TX
Latham, Jesse Del Rio, TX
Lockett, Joe Nashville, TN
Lowry, Billy Austin, TX
Mack, Marlene Madison, WI
Manning, Joan Nashville, TN
McDonald, Keith Ames, IA
McDonald, Ruth Ames, IA
McNeal, Don Liberal, KS
Miller, Charles Ames, IA
Minor, Robert Ames, IA
Mosier, Chester Jerome, ID
Odell, Dorthey Olympia, WA
Olson, David Ames, IA
Orman, Todd Key West, FL
Peterson, Carmen Pierre, SD
Register, Betty Gainesville, FL
Russell, Katherine Frankfort, KY
Scheevel, Katharine Ames, IA
Smith, Ingrid Olympia, WA
Stiles, Lewis Broken Bow, OK
Szanto, Robert, Jr. Waco, TX
Tanner, James Jackson, MS
Tilley, Wayne Ames, IA
Wilson, Verna St. Paul, MN
Worth, Melvin Blaine, WA
Wyand, Amos Keedysville, MD
Youngquist, Arvid Austin, TX
Zaveski, Daniel Orient Point, NY

Wildlife Services

Connolly, Guy Lakewood, CO
Crosby, Lyle Casper, WY
Drakulich, Renee Fort Collins, CO
Graham, Gary Willcox, AZ
Johnson, Richard Lakewood, CO
Johnson, Kay Nashville, TN
Kolz, Arvin Lakewood, CO
McHattie, Elsie Lakewood, CO
Phillips, Robert Fort Collins, CO
Ruth, Evelynn Lakewood, CO
Thornberry, Vida Fort Collins, CO
Zenk, Anne Reno, NV

Deaths

Inside APHIS sends its sincere condolences to the families of all the APHIS employees who passed away in 1997.*

International Services

Fox, Patrick
Los Angeles, CA
Yelvington, John
Hawthorne, FL

Plant Protection and Quarantine

McLean, George
San Francisco, CA
Rodriguez Rivera, Ramon
San Juan, PR
Saucier, William
Mission, TX
Walters, Douglas
New York, NY

Veterinary Services

Berndtson, Joel
St. Paul, MN
Lininger, Jerry
Key West, FL
Saari, Dennis
Ames, IA

Wildlife Services

Berg, Matthew
Oshkosh, WI
Jones, Lane
Roswell, NM
Mitchell, G.
Lakewood, CO

*Deaths and retirements are listed from information available as of January 1998. The lists may not include actions if they were not reported to the database before January.

APHIS Alumni Organization

Mission

The mission of the AAO is to foster and maintain traditional high levels of service to agriculture and the public through a cadre of resources serving in an advisory capacity to the Agency.

Building the AAO

One of the purposes of the AAO is to provide a pool of resources with experience and knowledge for the Agency, especially in an emergency or other urgent situations. To build this pool, they need members.

If you are not an official member and want to be, send in the application below with a check for \$5.00. This \$5.00 is your membership dues for an entire year! Not a bad deal.

Start Networking

One way to build this pool is to create local chapters. If you or someone you know may be interested in helping to organize a chapter in your State, let AAO know. This is key to creating the network. Some larger States may have more than one chapter due to membership or geographic size.

APHIS Alumni Organization

4700 River Road
Room 3D79
Riverdale, MD 20737
(301) 734-6504
e-mail: alumni@aphis.usda.gov
Web site: www.aphis.usda.gov/ao/alumni/alumni.html

The office is staffed from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on Thursdays. ❖

APHIS Alumni Organization New Member Application

Full Name (Mr./Mrs./Ms./Dr.) _____
Street Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Phone(s) _____
Date of Birth _____ Dates of APHIS Service _____
Actual/Expected Retirement Date _____ E-mail _____
Last Duty Station and Position with APHIS _____
Spouse's Name _____ Date of Birth (optional) _____

EXPERIENCE

APHIS PROGRAMS: PPQ VS WS(ADC) AC/IES(REAC) IS OTHER
Please give some specifics of your expertise and useful skills. _____

AVAILABILITY (Check all that apply.)

I am available for	I can work for APHIS as
Intermittent consultation (1-2 weeks each) _____	Volunteer (expenses paid) _____
Emergency Assignments (30-90 days each) _____	Paid consultant (work at home) _____
Other (explain) _____	Paid consultant (work at site) _____
	Other (explain) _____

Physical or health restrictions _____

MEMBER PARTICIPATION (Check all that apply.)

I will work for the AAO	as a local chapter leader _____
staffing AAO's Riverdale Office periodically _____	other (explain) _____
draft/review documents _____	

Please mail this application with \$5.00 annual dues (payable to AAO) to the address below. (Please send check or money order only.)

APHIS Alumni Organization
Attn: Rosemary Stanko, Treasurer
4700 River Road
Room 3D79
Riverdale, MD 20737
(301) 734-6504

signature _____
date of application _____

AAO 11-97

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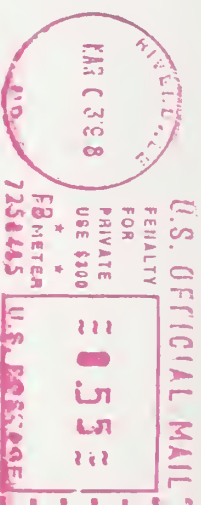
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